



United States Senator

MARY L. LANDRIEU
Louisiana

News Release

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REMARKS BY SEN. LANDRIEU REGARDING "OPERATION MEND A HEART" (as prepared for delivery)

NEW ORLEANS – U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu, D-La., was expected to deliver the following remarks here today to announce the creation of *Operation Mend a Heart*, a joint partnership between Tulane University Hospital and Clinic and the United States Military. *Operation Mend a Heart* will provide humanitarian medical assistance to underprivileged children of war torn foreign countries who would otherwise not have access to pediatric medical and surgical care.

Sen. Landrieu said:

"Earlier this year, I visited Baghdad and saw firsthand the difficult challenges our troops face there everyday. And I was struck by the strength and courage our young men and women on the ground had when facing those challenges.

"But I was also struck by something else.

"I was struck by the strength and courage of the Iraqi people. For years, that strength and courage allowed them to persevere under the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

"That strength and courage is what also led the Iraqi people to the ballot box in January even when faced with countless terrorist threats.

"And today, that strength and courage is helping the Iraqi people overcome the dangerous insurgency that has gripped their country.

"Unfortunately, these are hard times for the Iraqi people. But they still persevere.

"Perhaps there is no better example of this strength and courage than a little Iraqi boy named Baher. Baher is only 9 years old, too young to have to face the ravages of war – yet that is exactly what he has to do.

"But Baher's story does not end with the war. He faces another challenge.

"Baher has a hole in his heart. If this hole is not closed, Baher faces congenital heart disease and death.

"If Baher hopes to see adulthood, his heart requires advanced medical treatment. But in a time of war, Baher cannot get that medical treatment at home.

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"Thankfully, the good people of Louisiana are willing to help. Even though Baher cannot get the medical treatment he needs in Iraq, he can get it right here in New Orleans.

"And thanks to a new project named Operation Mend-A-Heart, Baher will get the treatment he needs.

"Operation Mend-a-Heart will provide humanitarian medical assistance to underprivileged children of war-torn countries who would otherwise not have access to pediatric medical and surgical care.

"It will help Iraqi children who are facing enormous odds by bringing them here to New Orleans where they can receive the medical attention they deserve.

"And today, I am pleased to announce that Baher will be the first Iraqi child to benefit from this ground-breaking program.

"The people behind Operation Mend-a-Heart understand that one way we can support our troops is by supporting the people they are fighting for, the children of Iraq. And I am honored to stand here with them today.

"The people of Louisiana may be divided over whether or not going to Iraq was the right decision. But we are united in the belief that we must do all we can to support our troops. And we are united in our compassion for the Iraqi civilians caught in the crossfire.

"I am overjoyed to know that the good men and women at Tulane Hospitals have taken the lead by creating Mend-a-Heart, the first program of its kind in the entire nation.

"I hope Operation Mend-a-Heart is only the beginning. So far, Tulane has already identified 50 underprivileged Iraqi children who require immediate medical attention, and I challenge every state to follow Louisiana's lead. If each state were to adopt just one child, we will have made an incredible difference in saving the lives of these innocent children.

"It takes a great deal of strength and courage for a 9 year-old boy to undergo surgery, much less travel half way around the world. But that is exactly the kind of strength and courage this young boy possesses.

"Together, the people of New Orleans will welcome Baher and his mother to our city and our country. Together, we will mend that young boy's heart. And together, we will make the world a better place for all our children - one heart at a time. "